

*International Education:
Realpolitik and Nixon's China Policy*

For this lesson, teachers should allow one to three days.

I. Content:

I want my students to understand (or be able to):

- A. The meaning of *realpolitik* and detente.
- B. The change in U. S. Foreign policy brought about by Pres. Richard Nixon and his national Security Advisor Henry Kissinger when they embraced *realpolitik* and detente.
- C. The content of the communiqué issued jointly by the U. S. and China following President Nixon's visit to China in February of 1972.
- D. The short-term consequences of recognizing Communist China with respect to U.S. - Soviet relations, nuclear arms reductions, and the Vietnam War.
- E. The long-term consequences of recognizing Communist China with respect to U.S. relations with Taiwan.

II. Prerequisites:

In order to fully appreciate this lesson the student must know (or be experienced in):

- A. The impact of the containment policy with respect to post WWII U.S. foreign policy.
- B. The tenor of U.S. relations with Communist China and with Taiwan 1949-1972.
- C. The status of Sino-Soviet relations since 1960.
- D. The responses of the Soviet Union and Communist China to the U.S. prosecution of the Vietnam War.
- E. The status of the U.S. - Soviet nuclear arms limitations negotiations.

III. Instructional Objective:

The student will develop an understanding of *realpolitik* and detente and an appreciation of the major policy shift with respect to Communist China.

IV. Materials and Equipment:

Teacher:

Access to a computer lab, chalk board, large world map, historical atlases (if internet access is not available), butcher paper, markers, and post-its.

Student:

Access to a computer lab, chalk board, large world map, historical atlases (if internet access is not available), butcher paper, markers, and post-its.

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V. **Instructional Procedure:**

Day One:

- A. Review with the class U. S. policies and goals during the Cold War with respect to the containment of communism.
- B. Divide the class into five small groups and assign each group one of the following:
 1. Central and South America
 2. Africa
 3. Asia
 4. *Middle East*
 5. *Europe*

Take the class to the computer lab and/or hand out historical atlases. Tell each group that it is to determine how successful the U. S. containment policy was between 1949 and 1972 by discovering where communism had been established in or imposed on a nation and which nations were dealing with communist insurgents trying to establish a presence.

- C. Hold a discussion in which students, using their annotated map, try to determine the relative success of containment.
- D. Introduce the concepts of *realpolitik* and detente as applied by National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger and President Richard Nixon:

Realpolitik-Foreign policy based on consideration of a nation's power rather than its ideals or moral principles.

Detente: The flexible policy which involves a willingness to negotiate and an easing of tensions while dealing with communist nations.
- E. Assign as homework the appropriate pages in the student text that deal with the creation of Nixon/Kissinger foreign policy. Make sure to include readings relative to SALT 1, Sino-Soviet relations, Chinese and Soviet responses to and roles in the Vietnam War, *realpolitik* and detente.

Day Two:

- A. Through lecture, discussion, and student questions summarize for students the incredible significance of *President* Nixon determining to shift U.S. foreign away from 25 years of containment and embark on the road to detente. Remind students of Pres. Nixon's role in HUAC and his public persona as an enemy of communism.
- B. Take the students to the computer lab and have them read or listen to the transcript of the PBS special, "Nixon's China Game":

www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/china.

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- C. Determine in advance how much of the transcript that you want the students to read and at what points you want to break for discussion and questions. Tell them to pay special attention to the secret nature of Kissinger's initial visit and the secret nature of the planning for President Nixon's trip. Ask the students to try to determine why secrecy was so important. Ask them for whom the consequences of U.S. recognition of China might cause a negative reaction nationally and internationally.
- D. Distribute to the class the Shanghai Communiqué (Appendix 1) which was issued as a joint Chinese- American statement. Read individually or go over it together. Make a list of items in the Communiqué that point to the U. S. adopting realpolitik and/or detente in its relations with Communist China.

Day Three:

- A. Have the students read Document 2, a memorandum of a discussion between Pres. Nixon and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai. The document can be found at:
[www2.gwu.edu \(LOOK FOR THIS\)](http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/publications/DOC_readers/kissinger/nixzhou)
[/~nsarchiv/nsa/publications/DOC_readers/kissinger/nixzhou](http://www2.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nsa/publications/DOC_readers/kissinger/nixzhou)
- B. Share with the students that this document was only declassified in 1999 and is still the subject of Freedom of Information Act review because it and other documents from the Nixon visit to China have been sanitized, that is, there are deletions of some text.
- C. Using the Shanghai Communiqué and Document 2, have each student write a clear, concise statement of official U.S. foreign policy toward the People's Republic of China and the official U.S. foreign policy toward Taiwan.
- D. Have the student's research five instances where U.S. actions with respect to China and to Taiwan coincide and five instances that contradict the foreign policy statements that they have generated.
- E. The teacher should present students with information relating to short-term impacts of the visit with respect to SALT 1 and the Vietnam peace negotiations.

VI. Assessment/Evaluation:

- A. The statement of U.S. Foreign policy assigned Day Three B.
- B. The research assignment from Day Three C.
- C. Test questions

VII. Idaho Achievement Standards:

- 9-12.USH2.1.1.2 Discuss the causes and effects of various conflicts in American History.
- 9-12.USH2.1.2.1 Identify motives for continued immigration to the United

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	States.
9-12.USH2.1.2.2	Analyze the changes in the political, social, and economic conditions of immigrant groups.
9-12.USH2.1.5.1	Describe the factors that contributed to the expansion of the United States.
9-12.USH2.4.3.2	Provide and evaluate examples of social and political leadership in American history.
9-12.USH2.5.1.2	Trace the major foreign policy positions that have characterized the United States' relations with the world in the 20 th century.
9-12.USH2.5.1.3	Explain the significance of principal events in the United States' relations with the world, such as World Wars I and II, formation of the United Nations, Marshall Plan, NATO, Korean and Vietnam Wars, end of the Cold War, and interventions in Latin America.

VIII. Follow Up activities:

- A. Have the students read about *President Clinton's* trip to China and pay attention to the responses of the Taiwanese government, the Congress, the press, and the public.
- B. Have the students read about *President G.W. Bush's* trip to China and pay attention to the responses of the Taiwanese government, the Congress, the press, and the public.
- C. Have a debate in which students argue whether or not the United States should have a one China or a two China policy.
- D. Have the students prepare a U. N. General Assembly discussion to determine whether or not to admit Taiwan as an independent nation. Assign students roles as ambassadors from countries with a national interest in the outcome. *Read U.S. Government-Grade 12 China Lesson.*
- E. Have the students write an essay or have a class discussion about the notion of *realpolitik* as the basis for foreign policy.

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How Many Chinas? What does the Joint U.S.- China Communiqué Mean?

**Appendix 1
Shanghai Communiqué**

Joint U.S.-China Communiqué

1. February 27, 1972

Following is the joint U.S.-China communiqué issued at Shanghai at the conclusion of President Nixon's trip to China:

President Richard Nixon of the United States of America visited the People's Republic of China at the invitation of Premier Zhou Enlai of the People's Republic of China from February 21 to February 28, 1972. Accompanying the President were Mrs. Nixon, U.S. Secretary of State William Rogers, Assistant to the President Dr. Henry Kissinger, and other American officials.

President Nixon met with Chairman Mao Zedong of the Communist Party of China on February 21. The two leaders had a serious and frank exchange of views on Sino-U.S. relations and world affairs.

During the visit, extensive, earnest and frank discussions were held between President Nixon and Premier Zhou Enlai on the normalization of relations between the United States of America and the People's Republic of China, as well as on other matters of interest to both sides. In addition, Secretary of State William Rogers and Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei [Ji Pengfei] held talks in the same spirit.

President Nixon and his party visited Peking and viewed cultural, industrial and agricultural sites, and they also toured Hangchow [Hangzhou] and Shanghai where, continuing discussions with Chinese leaders, they viewed similar places of interest.

The leaders of the People's Republic of China and the United States of America found it beneficial to have this opportunity, after so many years without contact, to present candidly to one another their views on a variety of issues. They reviewed the international situation in which important changes and great upheavals are taking place and expounded their respective positions and attitudes.

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The U.S. side stated: Peace in Asia and peace in the world requires efforts both to reduce immediate tensions and to eliminate the basic causes of conflict. The United States will work for a just and secure peace; just, because it fulfills the aspirations of peoples and nations for freedom and progress; secure, because it removes the danger of foreign aggression. The United States supports individual freedom and social progress for all the peoples of the world, free of outside pressure or intervention.

The United States believes that the effort to reduce tensions is served by improving communication between countries that have different ideologies so as to lessen the risks of confrontation through accident, miscalculation or misunderstanding. Countries should treat each other with mutual respect and be willing to compete peacefully, letting performance be the ultimate judge. No country should claim infallibility and each country should be prepared to reexamine its own attitudes for the common good.

The United States stressed that the peoples of Indochina should be allowed to determine their destiny without outside intervention; its constant primary objective has been a negotiated solution; the eight-point proposal put forward by the Republic of Vietnam and the United States on January 27, 1972 represents a basis for the attainment of that objective; in the absence of a negotiated settlement the United States envisages the ultimate withdrawal of all U.S. forces from the region consistent with the aim of self-determination for each country of Indochina.

The United States will maintain its close ties with and support for the Republic of Korea; the United States will support efforts of the Republic of Korea to seek a relaxation of tension and increased communication in the Korean peninsula. The United States places the highest value on its friendly relations with Japan; it will continue to develop the existing close bonds. Consistent with the United Nations Security Council Resolution of December 21, 1971, the United States favors the continuation of the ceasefire between India and Pakistan and the withdrawal of all military forces to within their own territories and to their own sides of the ceasefire line in Jammu and Kashmir; the United States supports the right of the peoples of South Asia to shape their own future in peace, free of military threat, and without having the area become the subject of great power rivalry.

The Chinese side stated: Wherever there is oppression, there is resistance. Countries want independence, nations want liberation and the people want revolution -- this has become the irresistible trend of history. All nations, big or small, should be equal; big nations should not bully the small and strong nations should not bully the weak. China will never be a superpower and it opposes hegemony and power politics of any kind. The Chinese side

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stated that it firmly supports the struggles of all the oppressed people and nations for freedom and liberation and that the people of all countries have the right to choose their social systems according to their own wishes and the right to safeguard the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of their own countries and oppose foreign aggression, interference, control and subversion. All foreign troops should be withdrawn to their own countries.

The Chinese side expressed its firm support to the peoples of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia in their efforts for the attainment of their goal and its firm support to the seven-point proposal of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of the Republic of South Vietnam and the elaboration of February this year on the two key problems in the proposal, and to the Joint Declaration of the Summit Conference of the Indochinese Peoples. It firmly supports the eight-point program for the peaceful unification of Korea put forward by the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on April 12, 1971, and the stand for the abolition of the "U.N. Commission for the unification and Rehabilitation of Korea." It firmly opposes the revival and outward expansion of Japanese militarism and firmly supports the Japanese people's desire to build an independent, democratic, peaceful and neutral Japan. It firmly maintains that India and Pakistan should, in accordance with the United Nations resolutions on the India-Pakistan question, immediately withdraw all their forces to their respective territories and to their own sides of the ceasefire line in Jammu and Kashmir and firmly supports the Pakistan Government and people in their struggle to preserve their independence and sovereignty and the people of Jammu and Kashmir in their struggle for the right of self-determination.

There are essential differences between China and the United States in their social systems and foreign policies. However, the two sides agreed that countries, regardless of their social systems, should conduct their relations on the principles of respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, non-aggression against other states, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. International disputes should be settled on this basis, without resorting to the use or threat of force. The United States and the People's Republic of China are prepared to apply these principles to their mutual relations.

With these principles of international relations in mind the two sides stated that:

progress toward the normalization of relations between China and the United States is in the interests of all countries;

both wish to reduce the danger of international military conflict;

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neither should seek hegemony in the Asia-Pacific region and each is opposed to efforts by any other country or group of countries to establish such hegemony; and neither is prepared to negotiate on behalf of any third party or to enter into agreements or understandings with the other directed at other states.

Both sides are of the view that it would be against the interests of the peoples of the world for any major country to collude with another against other countries, or for major countries to divide up the world into spheres of interest.

The two sides reviewed the long-standing serious disputes between China and the United States. The Chinese reaffirmed its position: The Taiwan question is the crucial question obstructing the normalization of relations between China and the United States; the Government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government of China; Taiwan is a province of China which has long been returned to the motherland; the liberation of Taiwan is China's internal affair in which no other country has the right to interfere; and all U.S. forces and military installations must be withdrawn from Taiwan. The Chinese Government firmly opposes any activities which aim at the creation of "one China, one Taiwan," "one China, two governments," "two Chinas," an "independent Taiwan" or advocate that "the status of Taiwan remains to be determined."

The U.S. side declared: The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Strait maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position. It reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of all U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan. In the meantime, it will progressively reduce its forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes.

The two sides agreed that it is desirable to broaden the understanding between the two peoples. To this end, they discussed specific areas in such fields as science, technology, culture, sports and journalism, in which people-to-people contacts and exchanges would be mutually beneficial. Each side undertakes to facilitate the further development of such contacts and exchanges.

Both sides view bilateral trade as another area from which mutual benefit can be derived, and agreed that economic relations based on equality and mutual benefit are in the interest of the peoples of the two countries. They agree to facilitate the progressive development of trade between their two countries.

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The two sides agreed that they will stay in contact through various channels, including the sending of a senior U.S. representative to Peking from time to time for concrete consultations to further the normalization of relations between the two countries and continue to exchange views on issues of common interest.

The two sides expressed the hope that the gains achieved during this visit would open up new prospects for the relations between the two countries. They believe that the normalization of relations between the two countries is not only in the interest of the Chinese and American peoples but also contributes to the relaxation of tension in Asia and the world.

President Nixon, Mrs. Nixon and the American party expressed their appreciation for the gracious hospitality shown them by the Government and people of the People's Republic of China.

1. Discuss Nixon's foreign policy methods: Why did he keep so many activities secret? Did secrecy help or hinder his ultimate goals? Was it legal? Who was harmed? Who had a right to know about such foreign policy? Was Nixon successful?
2. Nixon said of his trip to China, "This was the week that changed the world." Discuss the meaning behind these words: How did the balance of global power shift? What relationships were changed? How do they affect the world today? Have these changes been for better or worse?

Activities

1. Henry Kissinger noted of the television coverage of Nixon's historic trip, "Pictures overrode the printed word." Nixon made television coverage of his public actions in China a priority, and created a presidential public relations opportunity of a lifetime. Ask students to research and compare various press coverage from Nixon's trip—newspapers, Time magazine, television coverage included in the film. Which type of coverage do they think was most effective from Nixon's point of view? From the public's point of view? Why? Which was more critical? Which do students find more appealing? Why?
2. One newspaper noted of the outcome of Nixon's China trip, "They got Taiwan, we got egg rolls." Divide the class into two groups to debate whether Taiwan was treated fairly by Nixon. Students may use the People & Events feature "The [Shanghai Communiqué](#)" as reference. Did Nixon live up to previous promises? Did Taiwan suffer? What, if anything, did Taiwan lose? What, if anything, did China gain at Taiwan's expense?

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Which countries ultimately profited from Nixon's actions?

3. Intuitions as communes, factories, schools, hospitals, and kitchens, as well as to accompany her husband to social functions. She largely kept her opinions to herself. How has the foreign relations role of First Lady changed since Pat Nixon lived in the White House? How has it remained the same? Ask students to compare Pat Nixon with Hillary Rodham Clinton. Have them research personal papers, newspaper stories and columns, and photographs to discuss in class the public role of each. How meaningful are their actions? How controversial? How do their methods differ? How do their causes differ? Who has been successful, and why? What, in students' opinions, should be the role of First Spouse?
4. Although William Rogers was Secretary of State, it was national security advisor Henry Kissinger who acted as Nixon's right-hand diplomat during the China visit. Have students write a letter home from the point of view of William Rogers. Tone may be as informal as they like. Ask students to consider the following: What is the role of Secretary of State? Who actually acted in that role during the China visit? Was Rogers treated well by Nixon? Did he have all the information that he needed? Did he have input? How did he feel towards Henry Kissinger? (Students may reference the [Henry Kissinger interview](#).) How did Rogers feel about the outcome of Nixon's visit?.